

Small-Mesh Multispecies (Whiting)

COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY PANEL

MAY 19, 2026 | WARWICK, RI AND WEBINAR



**New England Fishery
Management Council**

2026 Small-mesh Multispecies Work Plan Review



New England Fishery
Management Council

Small Mesh Multispecies (Whiting)

Council Priority	Jan – Mar	Apr - Jun	July - Sept	Oct - Dec
Whiting specifications 2027-2031, other management measures		<div data-bbox="652 401 1166 596">Develop scope</div>	<div data-bbox="1182 401 2499 596">Develop specifications and alternatives, conduct analysis, prepare document</div>	
Exemption areas review and evaluation	<div data-bbox="402 843 907 1046">Review prior research; evaluate use of LOA; summarize existing measures</div>	<div data-bbox="937 843 1166 1046">PDT/AP Data Workshop</div>		
Risk Policy application	<div data-bbox="402 1082 907 1282">Risk Policy factor development</div>	<div data-bbox="937 1082 1442 1282">Risk Policy matrix and identification of data needs</div>	<div data-bbox="1467 1082 1972 1282">Risk Policy factor scoring</div>	
		<div data-bbox="1136 611 1437 796">Council: initiate action if needed</div>	<div data-bbox="1760 611 1972 796">Council: update on action</div>	<div data-bbox="1989 611 2186 796">SSC: OFL/ABC</div> <div data-bbox="2303 611 2499 796">Council: final action</div>

Updated April 6, 2026, NEFMC Staff

Risk Policy Workplan Details (Beta Phase)

	January	February	March	April	May	June
Meetings – Input - Decisions						
RPWG: Confirm Factors w/ goal/intent	Jan 23 rd					
NEFMC January	Update					
RPWG: Refining Concept			March 9th			
SSC: Check-in				30th		
NEFMC: Check-in, feedback						
RPWG: Refining Concept, Prepare June					TBD	
NEFMC June: Approval, weightings						Decision
Work – Refinement – Implementation						
Support Factor Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoring and Data Accessibility Process 		RPWG members and Implementation Team: Applegate, Miller, Garrison, Peros, O’Keefe oversight				Approval of Concept document
Refine Risk Policy Mechanics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shape of Curve Range of Scores Scaling 		Risk Policy Mechanics sub-group: Kerr, McNamee, Lawson, Peros, Ware, Brothers, O’Keefe, Miller				Approval of Concept document
Prepare for Weightings exercise						Weightings

2026 Risk Policy - FMP Implementation



Some standardization, but will not be the same for all FMPs/Actions

- **Groundfish Specifications.** Risk Policy integration with revised ABC CRs (FW68) for specs.
 - Supported by IRA #1, UMaine.
- **Small Mesh Specifications.** Risk Policy integration with current ABC CR (p^*) for specs.
 - Supported by Mr. Andy Applegate, small-mesh PDT.
- **Scallop Specifications (OFL / ABC).** Potential for Risk Policy integration with current ABC CR (focus on legal limits, p^*). Risk Policy scoring / weighting / Z-score to inform approach to rotational management, rationale for decision making.
- **Herring Specifications.** Continue to use the current ABC CR – Risk Policy not expected have a direct quantitative application to catch setting. (i.e. will not be linked to ABC CR).
- **Other applications.** Potential to support the Risk / Value assessment discussions for other FMPs.

Scope 2026 management action



New England Fishery
Management Council

PURPOSE OF MEETING

- Identify and recommend measures for the 2026 management action or potential 2027 management priorities
 - 2027 – 2031 catch specifications
 - Assessment data update, risk policy factor scoring
 - Red hake possession limit adjustments
 - Exemption area adjustments
 - Standardization of bycatch allowances
 - Letter of Authorization requirements
 - Exemption area seasons
 - Exemption area boundaries



SPECIFICATIONS

- **Current cycle: 2024-2026 fishing years**
 - Whiting – empirical assessment, catch at F associated with $P^*=25\%$
 - Northern red hake – ad hoc catch specifications based on trends
 - Southern red hake – 75% of catch specification to promote rebuilding
- **Update: 2027 up to 2031**
 - Data updates: catch and survey biomass, abundance at age/size
 - Ad hoc approach based on trends
 - Scientific uncertainty not estimated



OVERVIEW OF DATA UPDATES

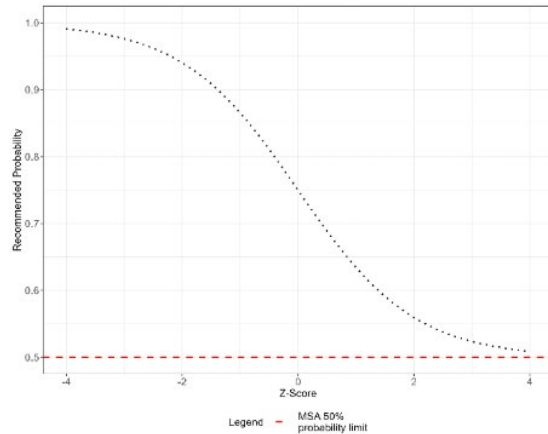
- Why data updates?
 - Adapting to capacity constraints across the region
 - Faster incorporation of new survey & catch data
- Data Updates →
 - Update key inputs without rebuilding full models
 - Refresh advice using new survey and catch data
 - Improve efficiency and timeliness
 - August 3, 2026 deadline for NEFSC to produce report for PDT use



Mechanics of Risk Policy & Implications

- To be proposed: Revised Z-score logistic curve and scoring rubric

Shape of the Curve



Z-Score Scaling

$$p(Z) = \frac{0.5}{1 + e^Z} + 0.5$$

$$Z = \sum (w_i s_i)$$

Range of Scores

FACTOR	Low Risk Score				High Risk Score				
	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
Management Status	Excellent		< 10% not done	10% not done	20% not done	30% not done	40% not done	50% not done	60% not done
Recruitment	Excellent		Good	Average	Below Average	Poor	Very Poor	Extremely Poor	Terrible
Climate Vulnerability	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Commercial Fishery Characterization					High	High	High	High	High
Recreational Fishery Characterization					High	High	High	High	High

- The shape of the curve, and scaling of scores, are interrelated concepts that impact the outcomes of the Risk Policy, and how it integrates with ABC CRs.

Scoring Factors – What to Expect, Guidance

- **SSB / Stock Status:** Guidance for analytical assessments is not expected to change, some recommendations from UMaine team for model-free approaches that will be considered.
- **Recruitment:** Quantile approach is being documented, will supply PDTs with Excel sheet.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** The scoring guidelines will provide PDTs with climate vulnerability scores.
- **Commercial Fishery Characterization:** Considering changes to questions and data.
- **Recreational Fishery Characterization:** Considering changes to questions and data.
- ***June 3rd RPWG meeting: Scoring and scoring guidelines currently under development***

New rubric: Five Factor Approach for 2026



FACTOR	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
SSB / Stock Status	Below threshold		<75% but above Threshold		Neutral		Rebuilt		Well Above Target
Recruitment	Persistent Low Recruitment		Recent Low Recruitment		Average, No Trend		Recent Large Year Classes		Multiple Large Year Classes
Climate Vulnerability	High Negative Direction	High	Moderate, Negative Direction	Moderate	Low				
Commercial Fishery Characterization					Minimal stress	Low stress	Moderate stress	Elevated stress	High stress
Recreational Fishery Characterization					Minimal stress	Low stress	Moderate stress	Elevated stress	High stress

Domestic Whiting Prices and Imports



KEY CONCLUSIONS

- An inverse and statistically significant negative relationship exists between silver hake prices and domestic landings, total whiting supply, and whiting imports
- Imports from South America (mainly Argentina) are a major driver of recent silver hake price declines.
- Import prices are less volatile, amplifying downward pressure on prices when volumes increase.
- Fuel prices, inflation, and broader macroeconomic factors also influence prices.
- Price movements across fish markets suggest possible cointegration.
- The sharp decline in U.S. silver hake prices after 2022 is best explained by a surge in relatively low-priced whiting imports interacting with stable domestic landings, broader fish market trends, and macroeconomic forces.

Interpreting Price Signals

- Recent price declines appear driven primarily by external supply forces (imports) rather than domestic harvest levels
- Low prices do not imply overfishing or excessive domestic catch in the silver hake fishery
- Price signals may therefore be weak indicators of biological or management performance specific to this fishery

Revenue and Fishery Performance

- Increased imports can reduce ex-vessel revenues even when quotas, effort, and biomass are stable
- Revenue volatility may affect fleet profitability, crew incomes, or port-level economic outcomes

Trade and Market Exposure

- US silver hake prices are exposed to global whiting markets, particularly South American supply
- Import prices are less volatile, limiting domestic price recovery when supply demands
- Market outcomes increasingly depend on trade dynamics outside fishery management control
- Economic outcomes and biological outcomes may move independently under globalized markets

Key Takeaway:

Silver hake price dynamics in recent years reflect global supply conditions more than domestic fishery activity, underscoring the importance of interpreting economic signals within a broader trade and market context.

Advisory Panel Report



New England Fishery
Management Council

FISHERY PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

What factors have influenced recent fishing activity and how?

- **Offshore wind development:** traditional fishing grounds; may be impacts when operational
- **Markets:** number of boats fishing, other fisheries, imports can drive price; frozen market in southern New England (stabilized prices, but not economical for northern ports to ship product); Long Island vessels supply fresh market in NY
- **Whiting availability:** have seen more whiting in some SNE areas
- **Other fisheries:** Scup fishery closed early, some vessels switching to small mesh, expecting price decrease as effort shifts from scup/fluke
- **Skate bycatch:** gear-dependent

How might these factors change in the near future? How do you anticipate that the fishery will adjust to these changes? How is the industry adjusting to changes in fish distribution?

- **Changes in timing:** fish arriving and leaving later; different timing in GOM this year due to colder water temperatures
- **Fish distribution:** fewer large fish in Ipswich Bay; lots of large whiting in Area II, but fishery was short



FISHERY PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Have any recent regulatory changes in related fisheries affected your small-mesh multispecies fishing and how?

- Increased possession limit for <3” mesh led to more whiting landings, lowered price
- More targeting from other small-mesh fisheries lowers price; quality difference

Are the current small-mesh fishery regulations appropriate? How could they be improved and how would they affect the small-mesh multispecies fishery?

- Whiting possession limits fine; could adjust PLs for non-targeted trips
- Some interest in increasing northern red hake possession limit
- Exemption area changes – timing/expansions to increase seasonal flexibility

What other factors may affect the small-mesh multispecies fishery going forward?

- **Offshore development:** offshore wind, aquaculture, marine carbon dioxide removal
- **Climate change:** shifts in fish distribution/timing
- **Other fisheries:** more participation in whiting fishery if other fisheries are less profitable

Are there any recreational fishing issues that should be considered?

- None raised



AP MEETING DISCUSSION

Note: there were no motions or consensus statements from the Advisory Panel. Topics listed below were raised throughout the April 1 meeting.

- Adjust possession limits so directed fishery is still 15,000 lb but non-target fisheries are lower
- Increase northern red hake possession limit
- Exemption area changes
 - Would increase flexibility and opportunities for the fishery
 - Flagged Cultivator Shoal, Small-Mesh Area II for further review in bycatch ratio analysis
 - Increased lobster possession limit in Cultivator Shoal area?



Red Hake Landings and Discards on Observed Trips



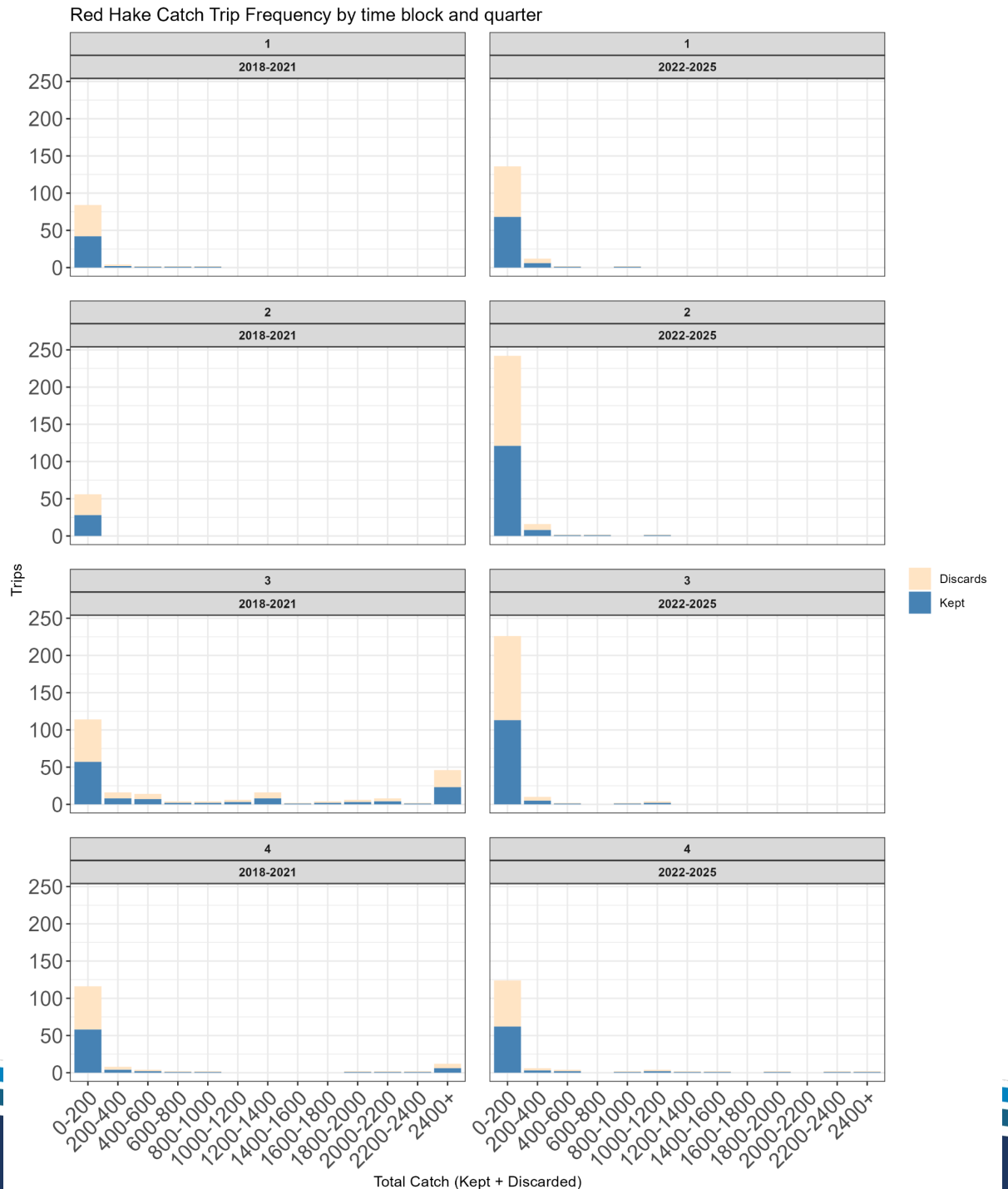
MONTHLY RED HAKE LANDINGS AND DISCARDS BY TRIP

MESH_GROUP	< 5.5 in					
AREA	(All)					
EXEMPTION_AREA_APPROX	(Multiple Items)					
Row Labels	Total red hake landings	Total SMS discards	Ave red hake landings per trip	Ave SMS discards per trip	Vessecs	
1994-2021	522,983	766,847	338.1	495.7	555	
1	375	793	5.1	10.9	5	
2	0	1,454	0.0	55.9	6	
6	1,360	1,828	17.0	22.9	7	
7	195,948	130,600	707.4	471.5	139	
8	206,825	178,712	506.9	438.0	189	
9	60,779	288,565	235.6	1,118.5	87	
10	46,917	137,993	222.4	654.0	79	
11	8,829	24,459	61.3	169.9	25	
12	1,949	2,444	27.8	34.9	18	
2022-2025	6,676	57,916	96.8	839.4	63	
1	0	281	0.0	70.1	4	
3	0	107	0.0	35.5	3	
5	0	155	0.0	25.9	5	
6	960	562	120.0	70.2	7	
7	653	13,694	65.3	1,369.4	10	
8	91	3,879	18.2	775.9	5	
9	321	5,689	35.7	632.1	9	
10	1,000	20,460	333.3	6,819.8	3	
11	2,390	11,487	170.7	820.5	12	
12	1,260	1,604	180.0	229.1	5	
Grand Total	529,659	824,763	327.8	510.4	618	

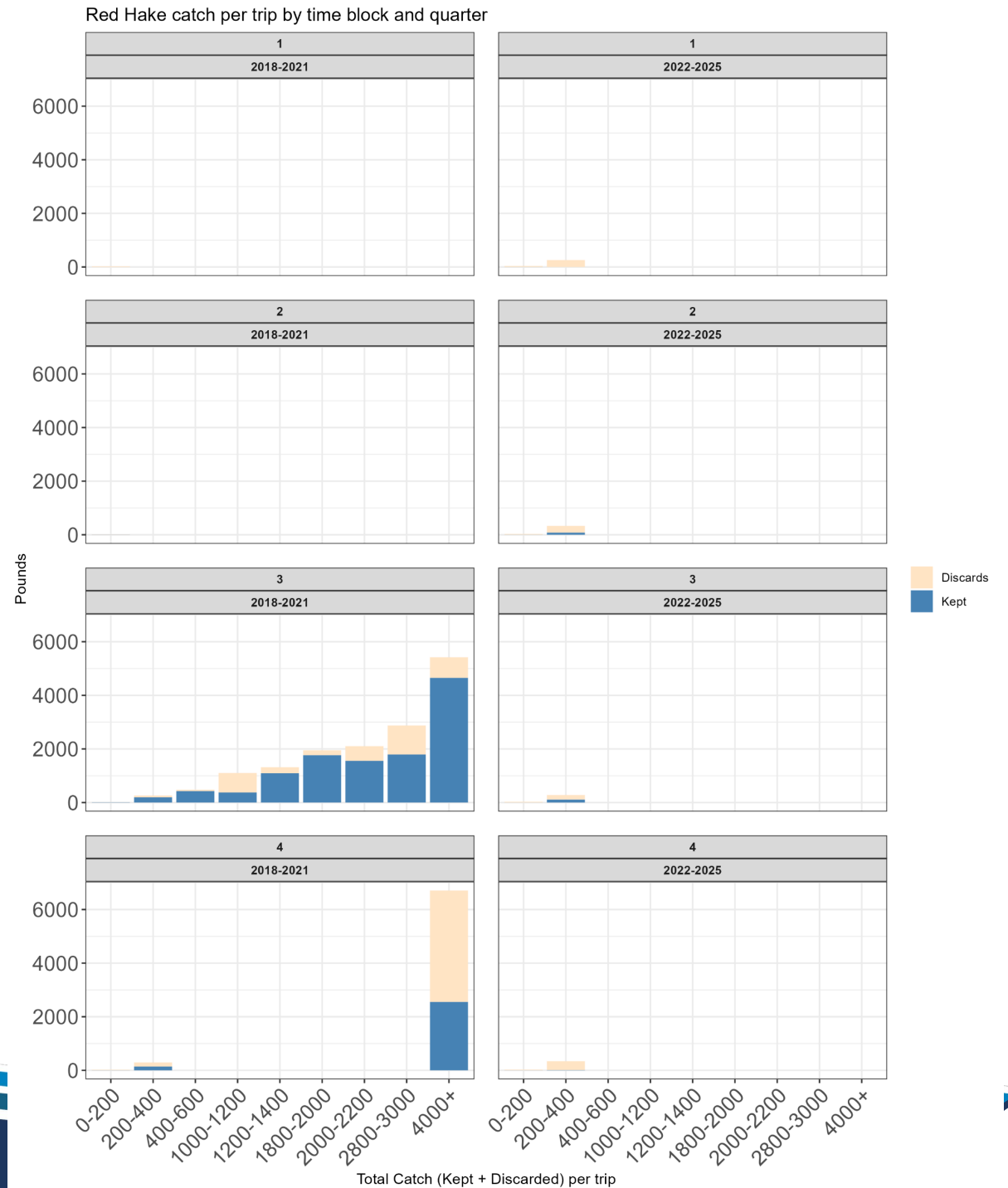


Northern red hake small mesh trips:

Number of observed trips in 2018-2021 and 2022-2025:
Catch of northern red hake, discards vs kept



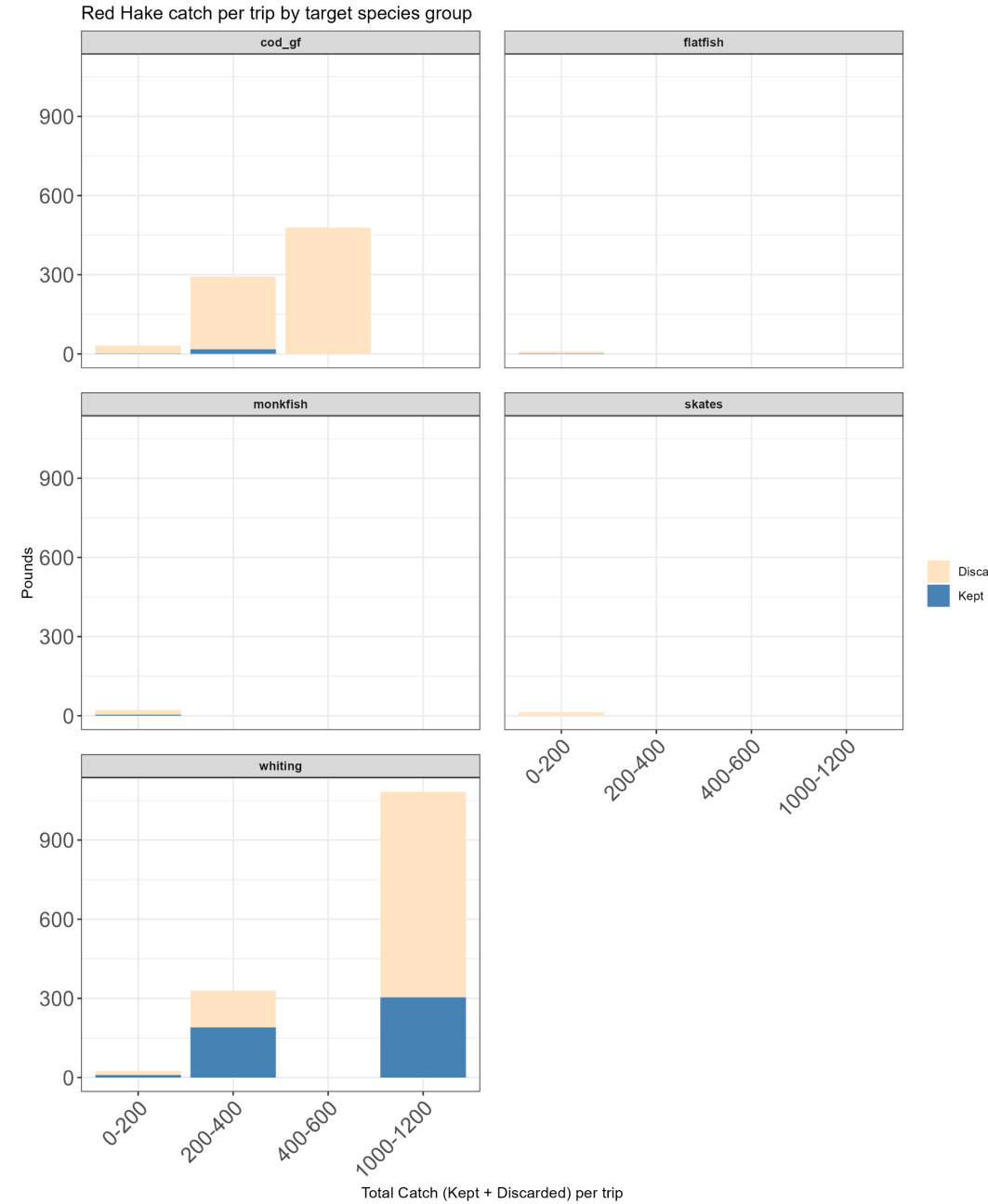
Catch of northern red hake on observed trips in 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 by category, discards vs kept



By trawl type

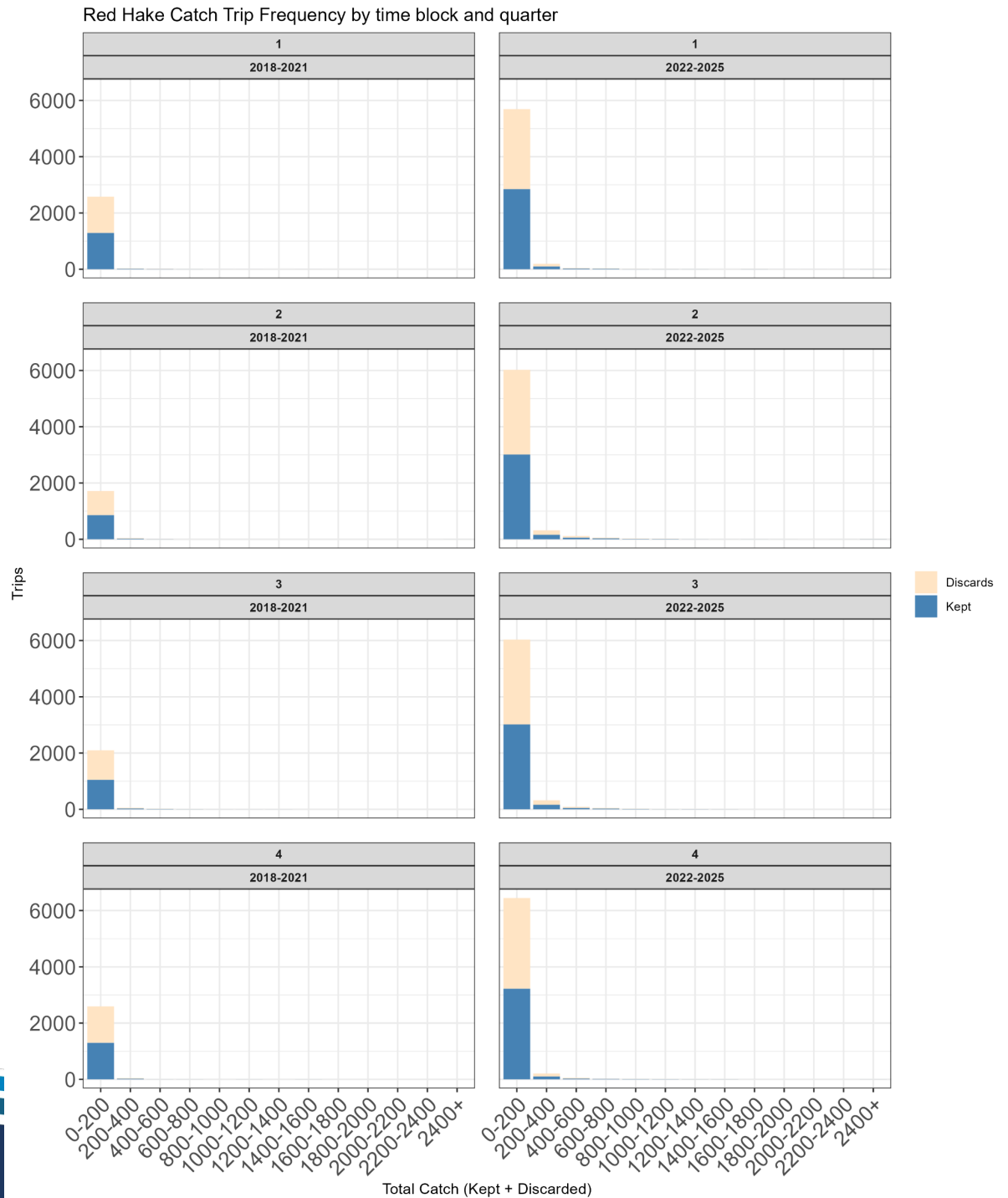


By target species group

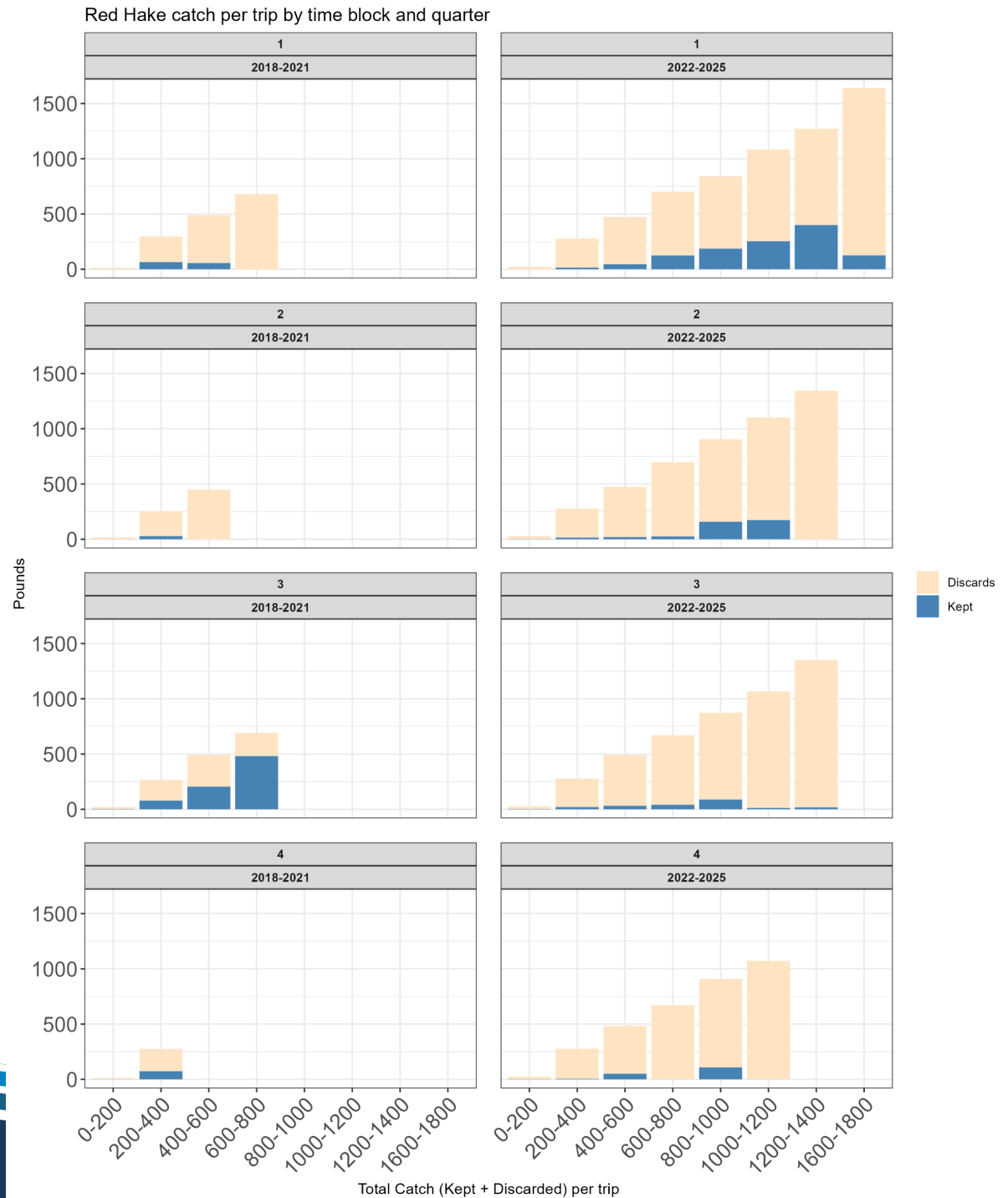


Northern red hake large mesh trips:

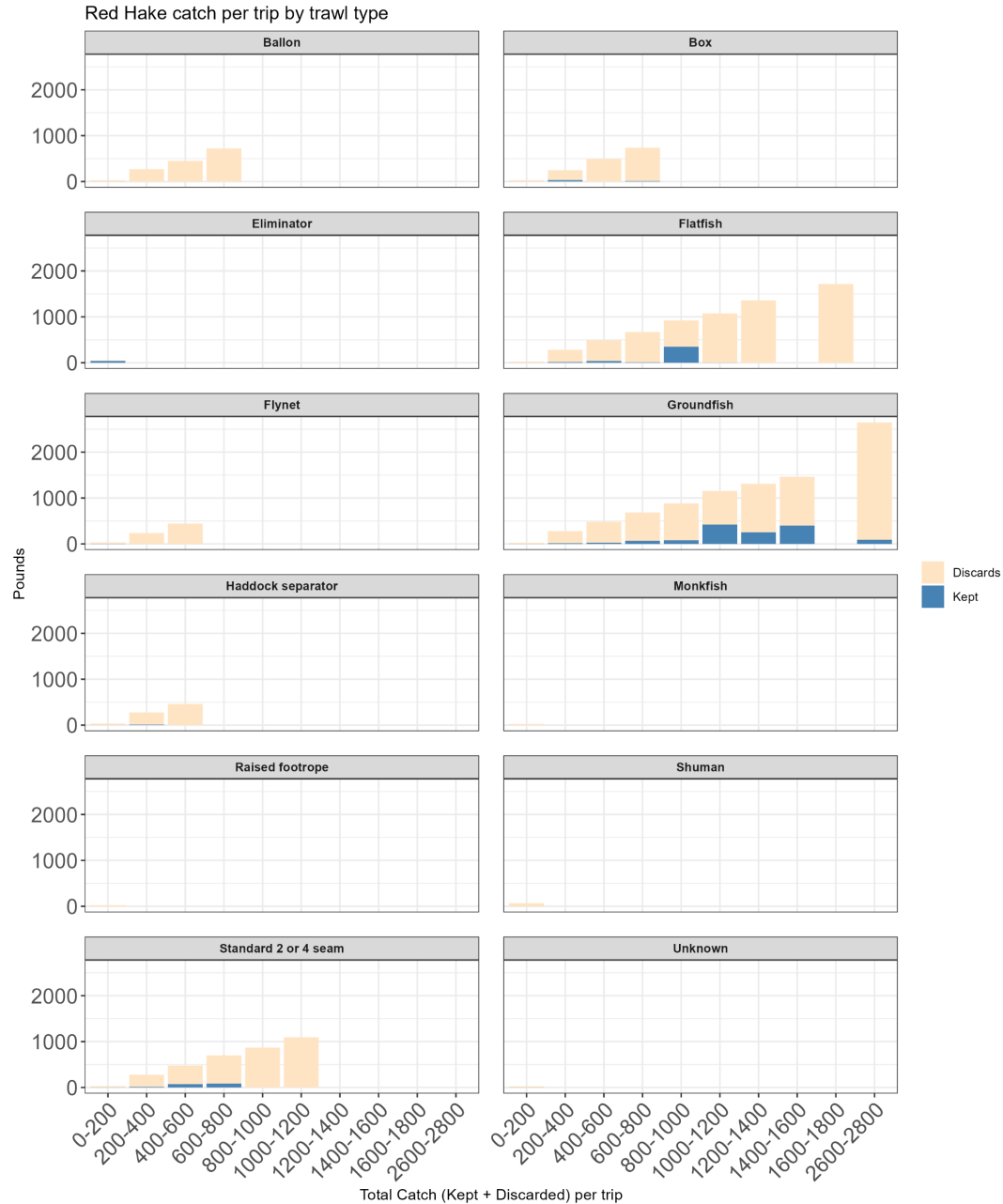
Number of observed trips in 2018-2021 and 2022-2025: Catch of southern red hake, discards vs kept



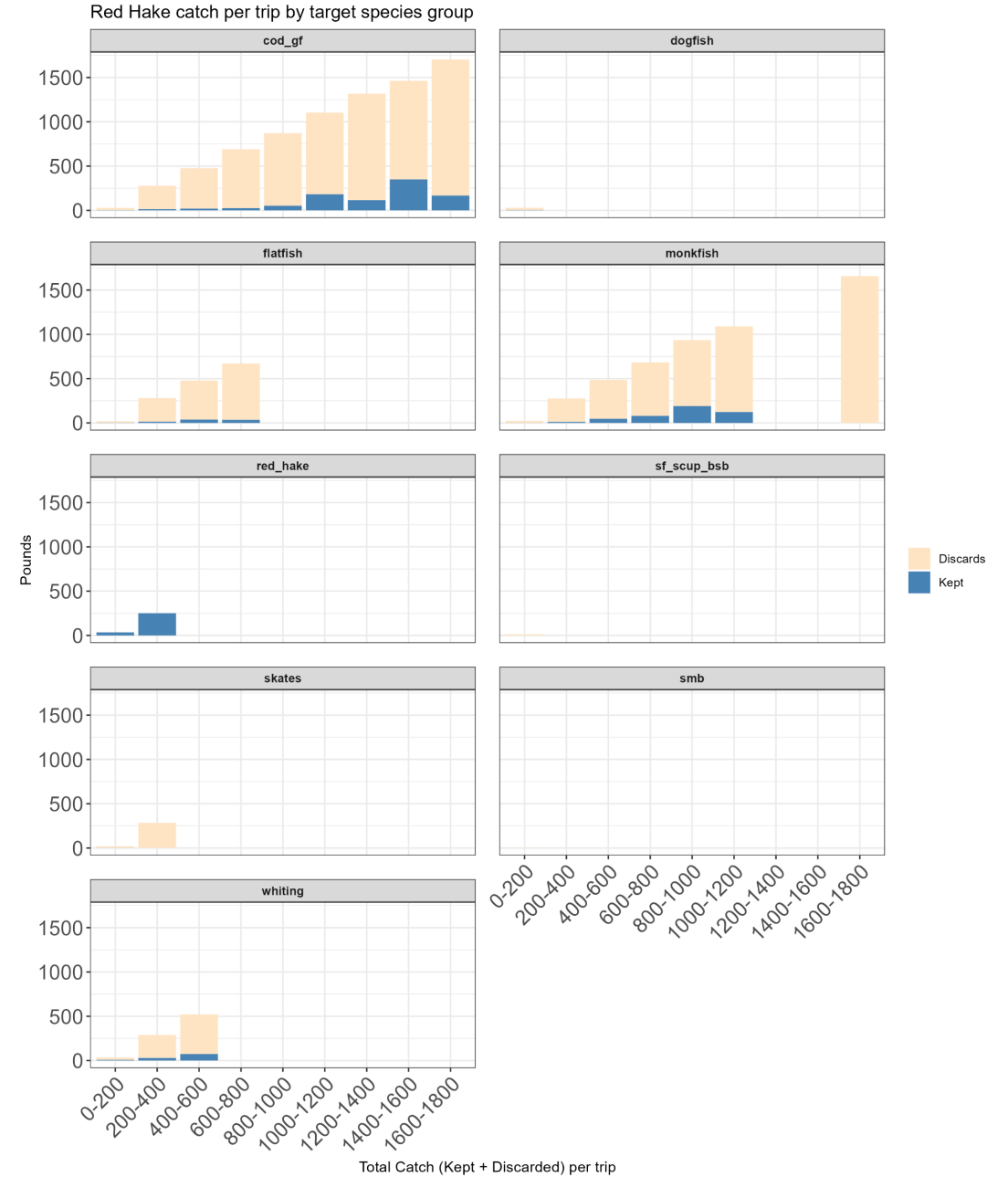
Catch of northern red hake on observed trips in 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 by category, discards vs kept



By trawl type

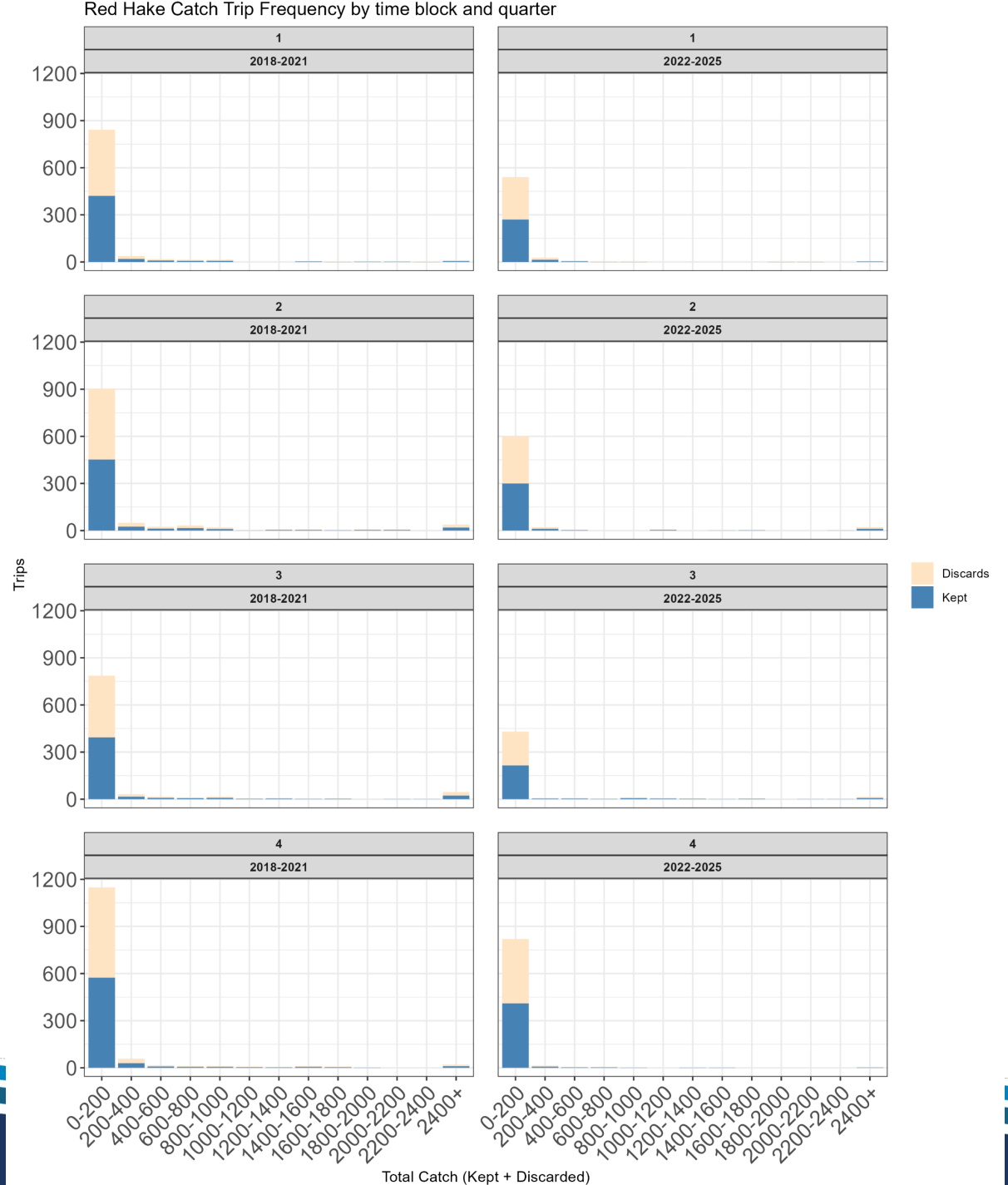


By target species group

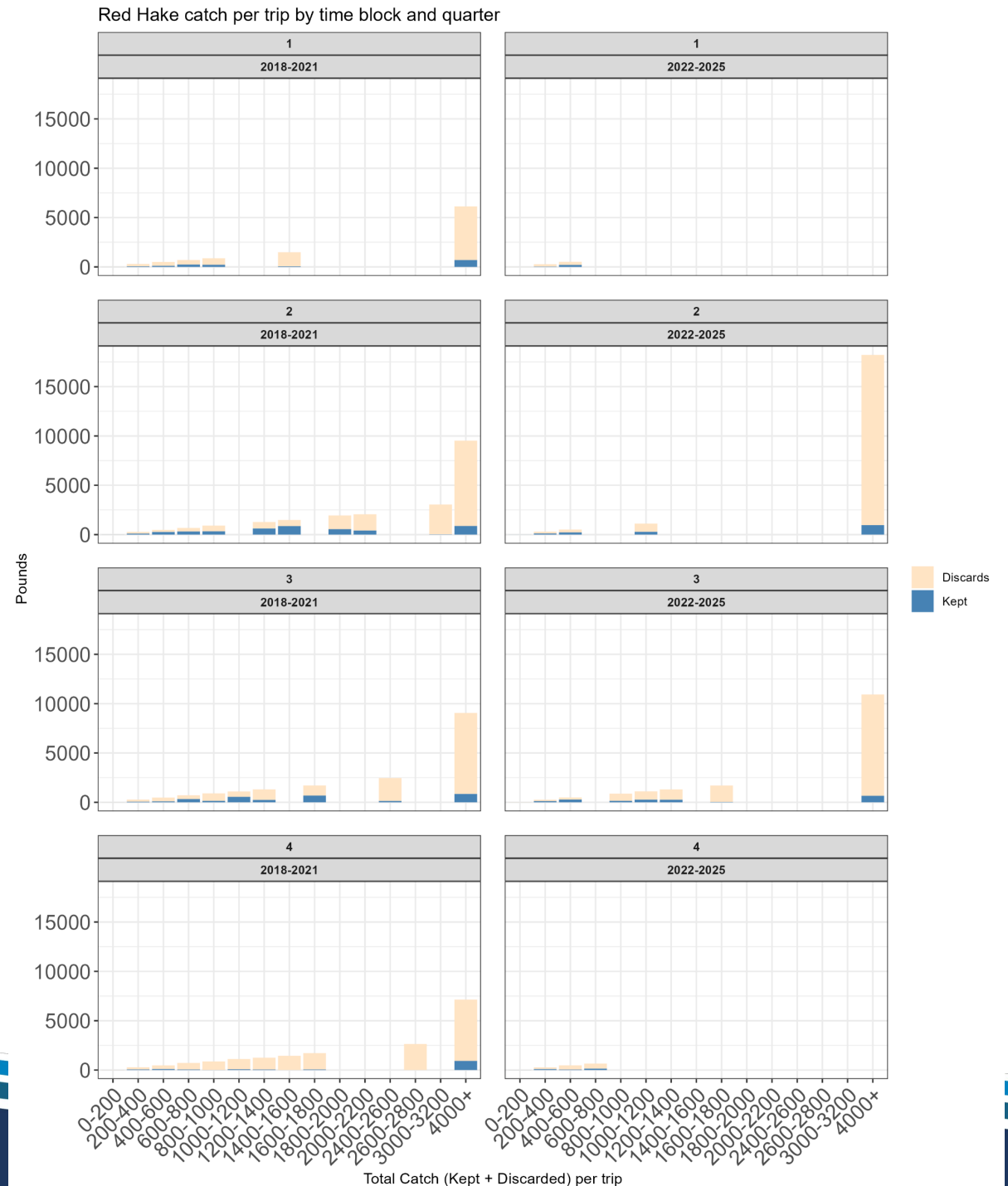


Southern red hake small mesh trips:

Number of observed trips in 2018-2021 and 2022-2025:
Catch of southern red hake, discards vs kept

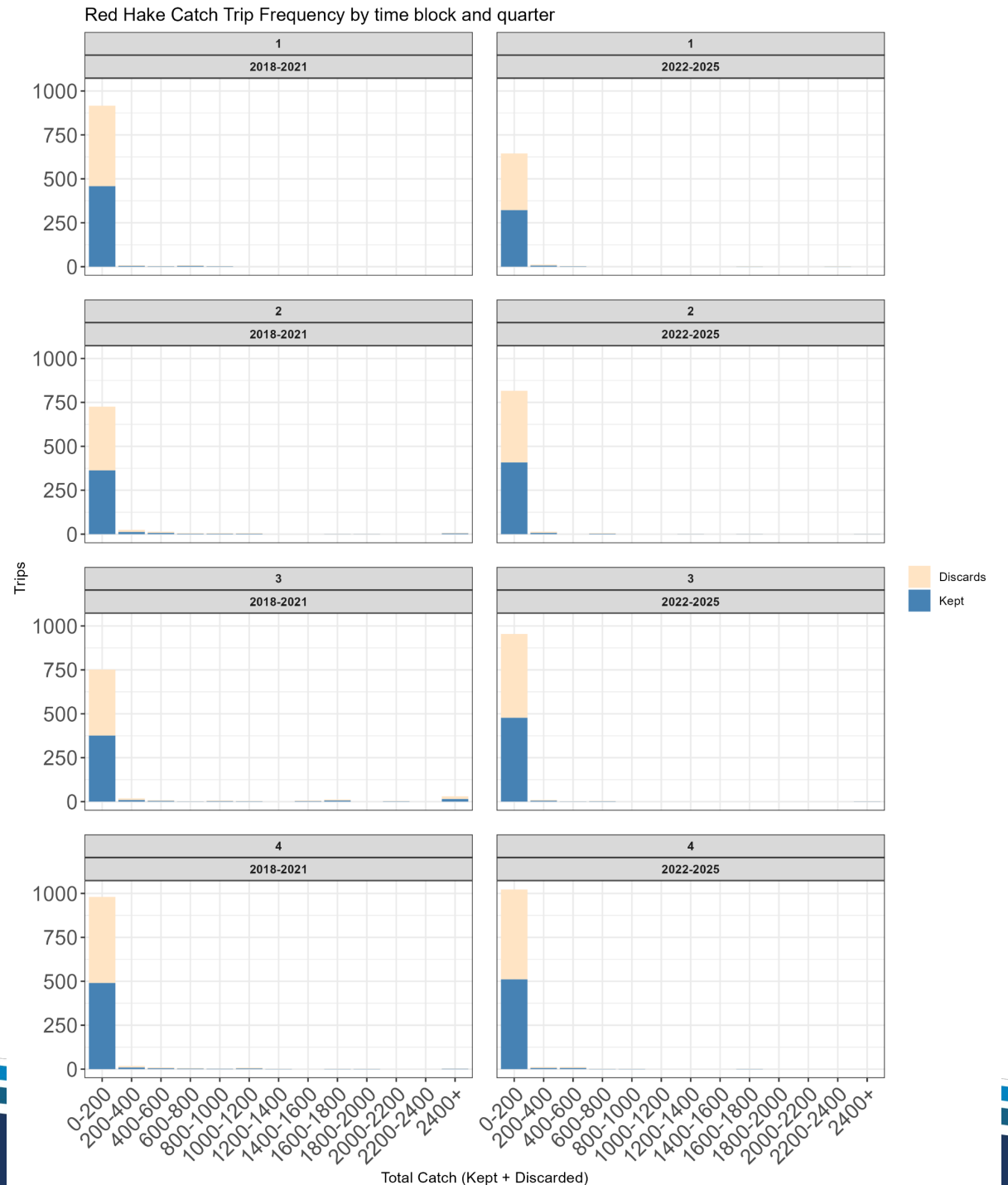


Catch of southern red hake on observed trips in 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 by category, discards vs kept

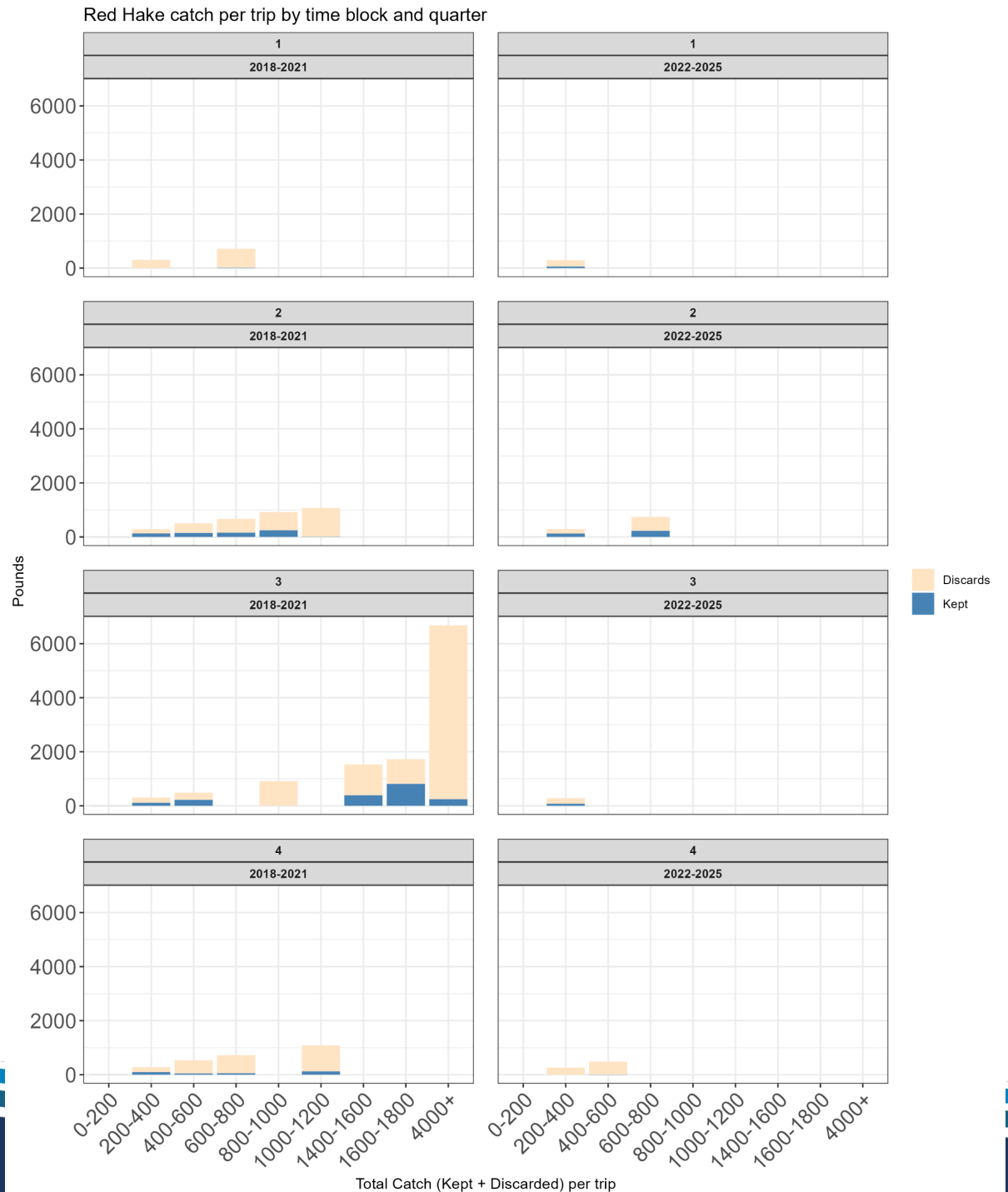


Southern red hake large mesh trips:

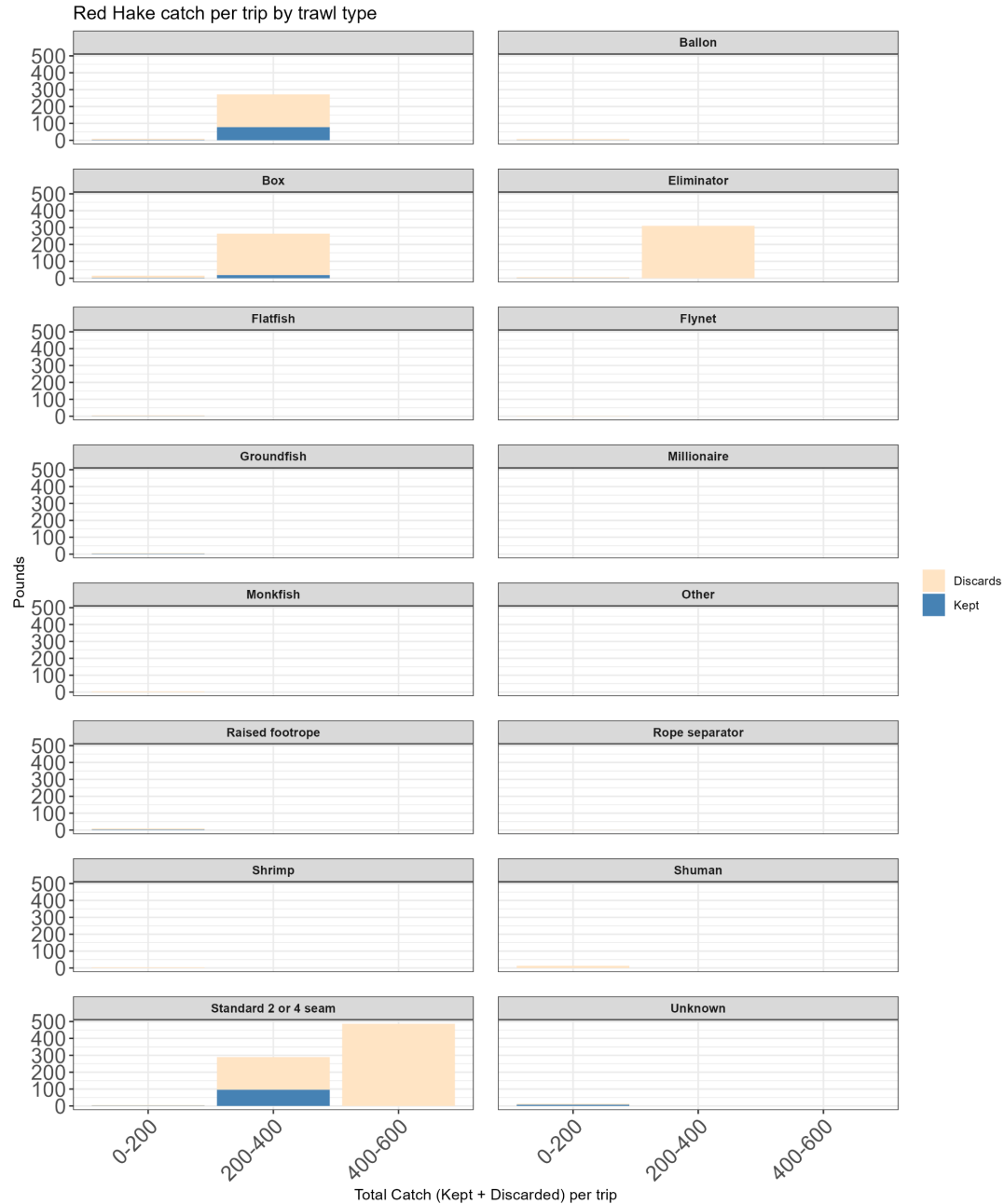
Number of observed trips in 2018-2021 and 2022-2025:
Catch of southern red hake, discards vs kept



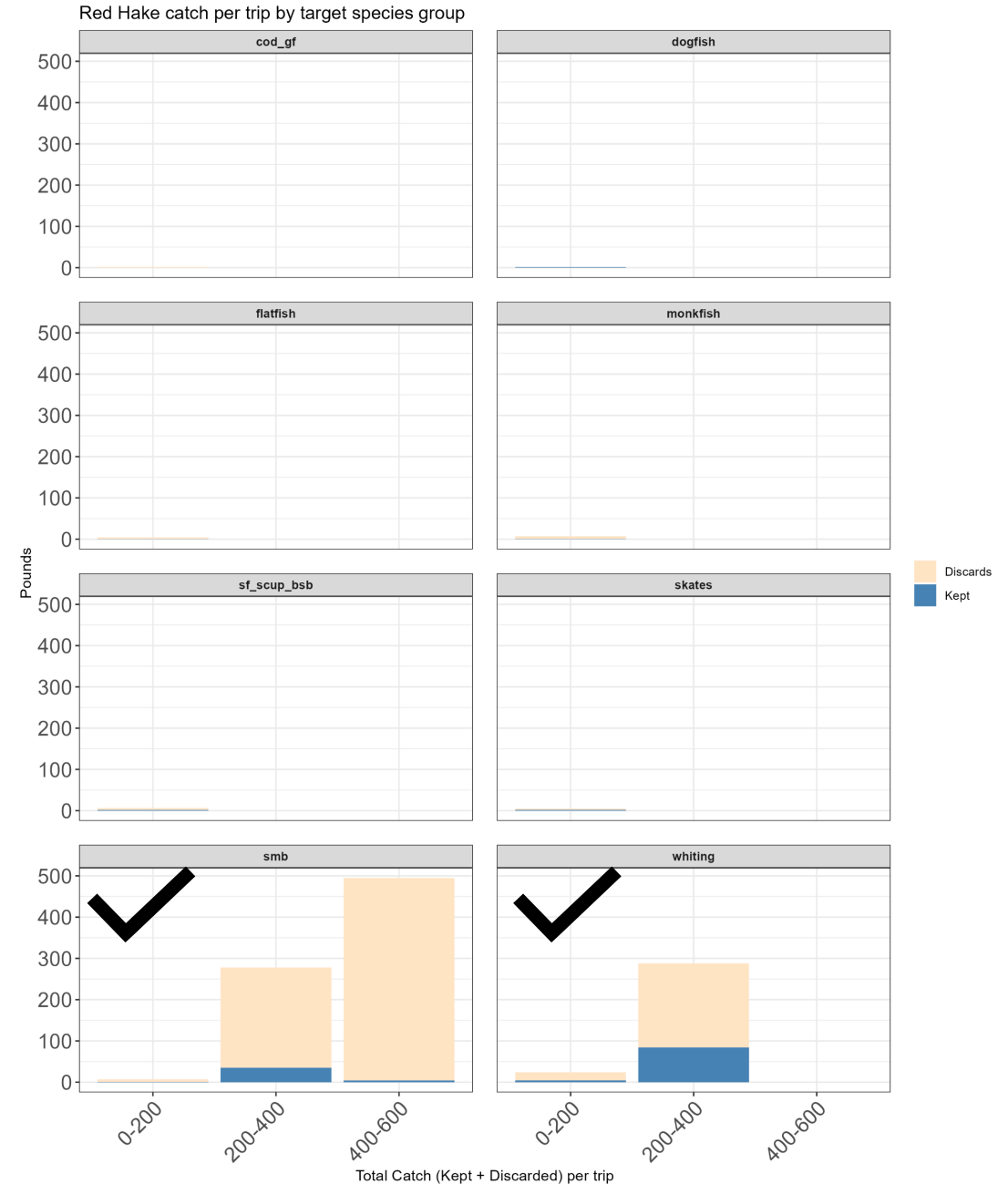
Catch of southern red hake on observed trips in 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 by category, discards vs kept



By trawl type



By target species group



YEAR	(Multiple Items)								
SAMP_PROG	(All)								
NEGEAR	(All)								
Column Labels									
2018-2021		2022-2025							
Row Labels	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Observed haul	Discards, Percent	Observed trip	Observed		
Discarded, other	870	0.12%	8	11	2,859	0.26%	64	141	
No market	713,927	97.23%	5020	27663	964,379	86.83%	9310	49065	
Poor quality	845	0.12%	55	74	1,957	0.18%	131	184	
Regulations	18,613	2.53%	176	541	141,406	12.73%	451	2159	
Grand Total	734,254	100.00%	5259	28289	#####	100.00%	9956	51549	

87% of red hake discards on observed trips in 2022-2025 were discarded because of having “no market”

YEAR	(Multiple Items)												
SAMP_PROG	(All)												
NEGEAR	(All)												
Column Labels													
Row Labels	Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4			
	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	
Discarded, other	294	0.16%	12	350	0.08%	14	1,592	0.53%	16	623	0.33%	22	
No market	171,744	91.36%	1799	330,246	76.64%	2521	278,062	92.60%	2622	184,327	96.29%	2368	
Poor quality	77	0.04%	13	426	0.10%	41	1,282	0.43%	58	173	0.09%	19	
Regulations	15,865	8.44%	68	99,894	23.18%	196	19,335	6.44%	116	6,312	3.30%	71	
Grand Total	187,979	100.00%	1892	430,915	100.00%	2772	300,271	100.00%	2812	191,436	100.00%	2480	

Regulations cited more often as a reason for discarding in quarter 2 (April to June)

Particularly in statistical area 525



YEAR	(Multiple Items)															
SAMP_PROG	(All)															
NEGEAR	(All)															
MONTH2	Quarter 2															
Column Labels		525			522			521			515			514		
Row Labels	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	
No market	73,447	51.40%	108	63,455	96.53%	266	60,507	95.03%	379	33,967	94.96%	303	31,217	94.62%	634	
Regulations	69,456	48.60%	4	2,278	3.47%	28	3,167	4.97%	38	1,804	5.04%	22	1,776	5.38%	58	
Grand Total	142,903	100.00%	112	65,733	100.00%	294	63,674	100.00%	417	35,771	100.00%	325	32,992	100.00%	692	

YEAR	(Multiple Items)									
SAMP_PROG	(All)									
MONTH2	Quarter 2									
Column Labels										
Bottom trawl		Scallop dredge			Haddock separator					
Row Labels	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	Discards, lbs	Percent	Observed trips	
No market	281,808	74.21%	2016	34,305	96.23%	363	13,397	96.06%	58	
Regulations	97,913	25.79%	151	1,344	3.77%	31	549	3.94%	9	
Grand Total	379,721	100.00%	2167	35,649	100.00%	394	13,946	100.00%	67	

By vessels using bottom trawls

LESSONS LEARNED

- Few, if any, observed trips have red hake catches exceeding the possession limits
- A high proportion of red hake catches are discarded regardless of how much is caught
- Some observed whiting trips in the southern management area have red hake catches above 4000 lbs. – seems isolated to SA 525 (SE Georges Bank)
- Intent of the southern red hake rebuilding measures (possession limits: 600 lbs. or 1000 lbs. for selective and large-mesh trawls) was meant to cause fishermen to avoid areas with high red hake catches.
- 3,000 lbs. possession limit in the northern management area might be raised to 5,000 lbs. for vessels with an active Letter of Authorization.



Exemption Area History and Management Overview



New England Fishery
Management Council

REVIEW OF SPECIFICATION AND FRAMEWORK ACTIONS IN THE SMALL-MESH FMP

- Small-mesh multispecies specifications package:
 - Sets OFL, ABC, ACL, and TAL for each stock for at least 3 years
 - Can include modifications to specifications values, possession limits, and in-season possession limit adjustment triggers
 - May also include measures to ensure specifications are not exceeded (monitoring/data collection; stock status determination criteria)
- Framework adjustment:
 - Covers changes to existing elements of the FMP
 - Required for changes to **the existing** exemption areas



Boundaries and Seasons

Exploration Of SMS To GFLM Catches

Prior research

- Initial experimental fisheries – 1990s
- MA DMF experimental fishery
 - Data from small-mesh area I
 - 2 years
 - Changes in SMS to groundfish catch ratios were insignificant
- PDT analysis of raised footrope trawl was inconclusive
 - No valid comparison in the same areas and seasons



RECENT EXEMPTION AREA RESEARCH

2016-2017: MA DMF conducted an experimental fishery in Small-Mesh Area 1, Raised Footrope Trawl Exemption Area (western portion)

- Wanted to explore opening exemption areas earlier

Main discards were haddock, lobster, plaice, spiny dogfish; accumulated to slightly more than 5% of kept catch (lots of haddock at the time)

No strong recommendations for spatial/temporal changes in exemption areas



PRIOR AP/COMMITTEE DISCUSSION RE: EXEMPTION AREAS

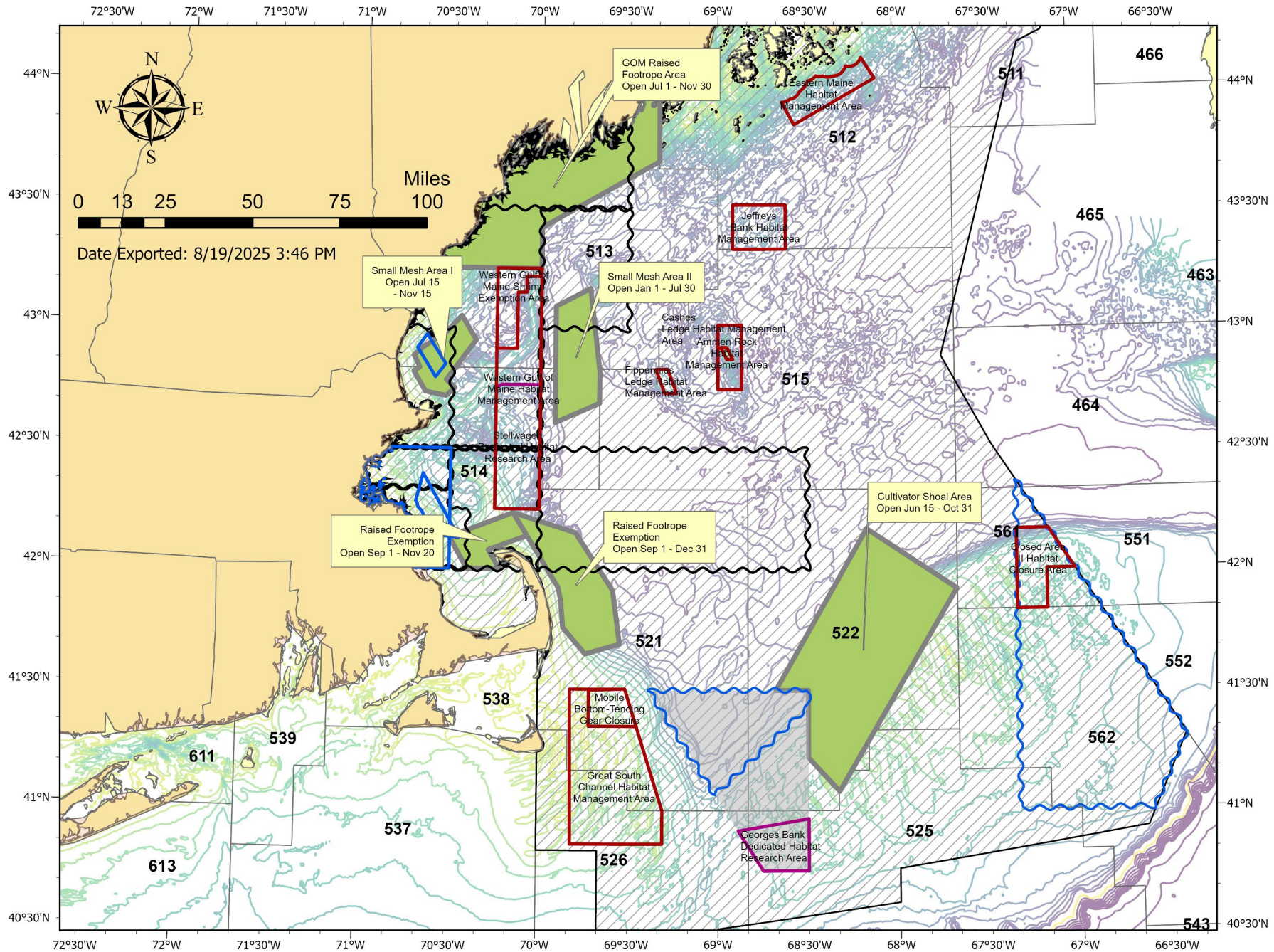
November 2023 AP/Cte meeting:

- Some discussion around changing exemption area seasons/boundaries; forwarded a recommendation to the Council, but was not included in IRA project proposal

November 2025 AP/Cte meeting:

- Suggestion to reexamine Small Mesh Area 2 and Cultivator Shoals Area (alignment with new habitat and groundfish management areas, adjusting dates of opening)





1991

Cultivator Shoal,
Southern New
England
exemption areas
open

1995

Small Mesh
Areas 1 & 2
open

1996

Mid-Atlantic
Exemption Area
redefined

2000

Raised Footrope
Trawl (Cape
Cod) Area
opened

2003

Inshore Gulf of
Maine Raised
Footrope Trawl
Area opened



Exemption Area		Gulf of Maine Grate Raised Footrope Trawl	Cultivator Shoal	Small Mesh Area 1	Small Mesh Area 2	Raised Footrope Trawl Areas (Cape Cod)	Southern New England	Mid-Atlantic
Season		July 1-Nov 30	June 15-Oct 31	July 15-Nov 15	Jan 1 – June 30	Sept 1- Nov 20/Dec 31 (eastern portion)	Year round	Year round
Gear Requirements	Mesh size	Minimum 2.5” square or diamond	Minimum 3” square or diamond			Minimum 2.5” square or diamond	Can only land small-mesh species with trawl gear; minimum 6” diamond or 6.5” square mesh (vessels fishing under NE mult DAS or sector trip).	Trawl: may use <6.5” mesh if participating in exempted fishery
	Other	Raised footrope trawl with excluder grate; no sweep	N/A	Raised footrope trawl		Raised footrope trawl		Gillnet exempted fishery: only gillnet gear, minimum 5” mesh. Limited to 50 gillnets
Possession Limit	Red Hake	Northern: 3,000 lb	Northern: 3,000 lb	Northern: 3,000 lb		Northern: 3,000 lb	Southern: <5.5” mesh: 600 lb ≥5.5” mesh using small-mesh selective trawls: 1,000 lb	Southern: <5.5” mesh: 600 lb ≥5.5” mesh using small-mesh selective trawls: 1,000 lb
	Whiting (Silver/Offshore Hake)	7,500 lb	30,000 lb	<3” mesh: 15,000 lb ≥3” mesh: 30,000 lb		<3” mesh: 15,000 lb ≥3” mesh: 30,000 lb	<3” mesh: 15,000 lb ≥3” mesh: 40,000 lb	<3” mesh: 15,000 lb ≥3” mesh: 40,000 lb
Incidental Species allowed		Atlantic herring; Atlantic mackerel; Alewife; Butterfish; Squid	Atlantic herring; Atlantic mackerel; Butterfish; Squid; Longhorn sculpin; Spiny dogfish; Monkfish & monkfish parts; American lobster	Atlantic herring; Atlantic mackerel; Butterfish; Squid; Scup; Spiny dogfish		Atlantic herring; Atlantic mackerel; Butterfish; Squid; Scup; Spiny dogfish	Atlantic herring; Atlantic mackerel; Butterfish; Squid; Scup; Spiny dogfish	
LOA Required?		No	Yes	No		Yes	No	No

Letters of Authorization



New England Fishery
Management Council

Letters of Authorization (LOAs) for Small-Mesh Exemption Areas

- Outline the terms and conditions for fishing in a particular exemption area: area, season, gear type, possession limits, bycatch limits
- LOAs required for Cultivator Shoal and Raised Footrope Trawl exemption areas; formerly required for SNE/Small Mesh 1 & 2/ Mid-Atlantic (requirement removed in 2000)

Fishing Year	Cultivator Shoal			Raised Footrope Trawl		
	# Permits	# Active Permits	# Trips	# Permits	# Active Permits	# Trips
2020	6	C	C	7	C	C
2021	4	4	68	5	4	43
2022	11	5	79	6	3	41
2023	9	5	51	8	5	39
2024	10	5	29	7	C	C
2025	3	C	C	5	C	C

Source: NOAA/GARFO. Retrieved 2/18/2026 by K. Winiarski
Confidential data is indicated by a "C".



LOA USES

- **Enforcement:** used during enforcement operations to determine compliance with regulations; provide clarity for vessel operators
- **Observer Coverage:** Not used to assign observer coverage
- **Management:** One initial objective of LOAs was to allow NMFS to identify vessels participating in the fishery → simplified monitoring; some data analysis applications
- **AP Discussion:** Use LOAs as a reference when needed, present for enforcement purposes.



Bycatch Allowances



BYCATCH LIMITS

- ***Small Mesh (<5.5 in) Prohibited*** by initial FMP (1985) to prevent bycatch of regulated species.
- ***Exemption Program Established*** that allows RA to exempt a fishery from minimum mesh size if bycatch of groundfish is less than 5%.
- ***Several whiting fishery exemptions*** have been approved in Gulf of Maine, Southern New England, and the Mid-Atlantic.
- ***Allowed bycatch species and limits*** vary between programs.
 - The GOM Grate Raised Footrope is the most restrictive.
 - The SNE exemption area allows possession of the most species.
 - Mid-Atlantic exemption area does not have bycatch limits.



Species	GOM Grate Raised Footrope Trawl	Cultivator Shoal	Small Mesh Areas 1 & 2	Raised Footrope Trawl (Cape Cod)	SNE*
Atlantic herring	X	X	X	X	X
Atlantic mackerel	X	X	X	X	X
Alewife	X				X
Butterfish	X	X	X	X	X
Loligo squid	X	X	X	X	X
Illex squid	X	X	X	X	X
Scup	X		X	X	X
Longhorn sculpin		X			X
Spiny dogfish		X	X	X	X
Monkfish		X			X
American lobster		X			X



****The SNE Exemption Area also allows small-mesh vessels to possess the following additional species:***

Swordfish	American shad	Bluefish	Shrimp	Blowfish
Spot	Hickory shad	Skate	Summer flounder	Tautog
Atlantic croaker	Alewife	Mullet	Weakfish	Cunner
Sea ravens	Four spot flounder	John Dory	Conger eel	Atlantic chub mackerel
Blueback herring	Tilefish	Ocean pout	Black sea bass	Sea robin



BYCATCH LIMITS

- ***Cultivator Shoal***: Created by A4 with 1% bycatch limit of regulated species based on experimental fishery data. Revised by A5, FW3, FW6, and FW9.
- ***Small Mesh Areas I and II***: Created by FW 9 exemption supplement.
- ***Raised Footrope Trawl***: Created by FW35. FW35 also prohibited possession of bottom-dwelling species, such as lobster and monkfish, to discourage vessels from rigging their gear improperly. Also applied to Small Mesh Areas I and II.
- ***FW37***: Limited all GOM raised footrope trawl areas to possession of: Red hake, squid, butterfish, mackerel, dogfish, herring, and scup.



BYCATCH LIMITS

GOM Grate Raised Footrope: Created by FW38.

Incidental catch set the same as for the Cape Cod Bay raised footrope trawl, with one exception that possession of dogfish was prohibited.

FW38 prohibited the possession of monkfish, lobsters, and skates to ensure that the net is rigged correctly, such that the footrope is not in contact with the bottom, and thus much less likely to catch those species.

Possession of crabs, longhorn sculpin, sea raven, and dogfish was prohibited to reduce damage to whiting and to encourage fishing the net with the footrope off the bottom.



Whiting and Large-mesh Groundfish Catch Ratios



New England Fishery
Management Council

BOUNDARIES AND SEASONS: EXPLORATION OF SMS TO GFLM CATCHES

- PDT has begun exploring catch and survey data by ten-minute square
- CAMS data (2018-2025) showed little indication of elevated SMS catches outside the EA boundaries. Data may be insufficiently granular.
 - Average catch ratio for trip reported as one lat/lon pair on a trip
- Survey data insufficiently granular over time
- Observed haul data (2021-2025)
 - Large mesh trips occur adjacent to exemption areas and seasons
 - Catch ratio as an indicator of potential small-mesh multispecies to groundfish catches
 - Species and size selectivity differences



BOUNDARIES AND SEASONS: EXPLORATION OF SMS TO GFLM CATCHES

- Observed haul data (2021-2025) – more promising.
 - Hotspots for trips using large mesh can be identified in time and space
 - Are there months and places where the SMS catch is relatively high, compared with large-mesh groundfish catch?
 - Considerations
 - Threshold? Minimum number of observed hauls/trips?
 - Consistency? Catch variation?
 - Selectivity? Different threshold for large vs. small mesh?

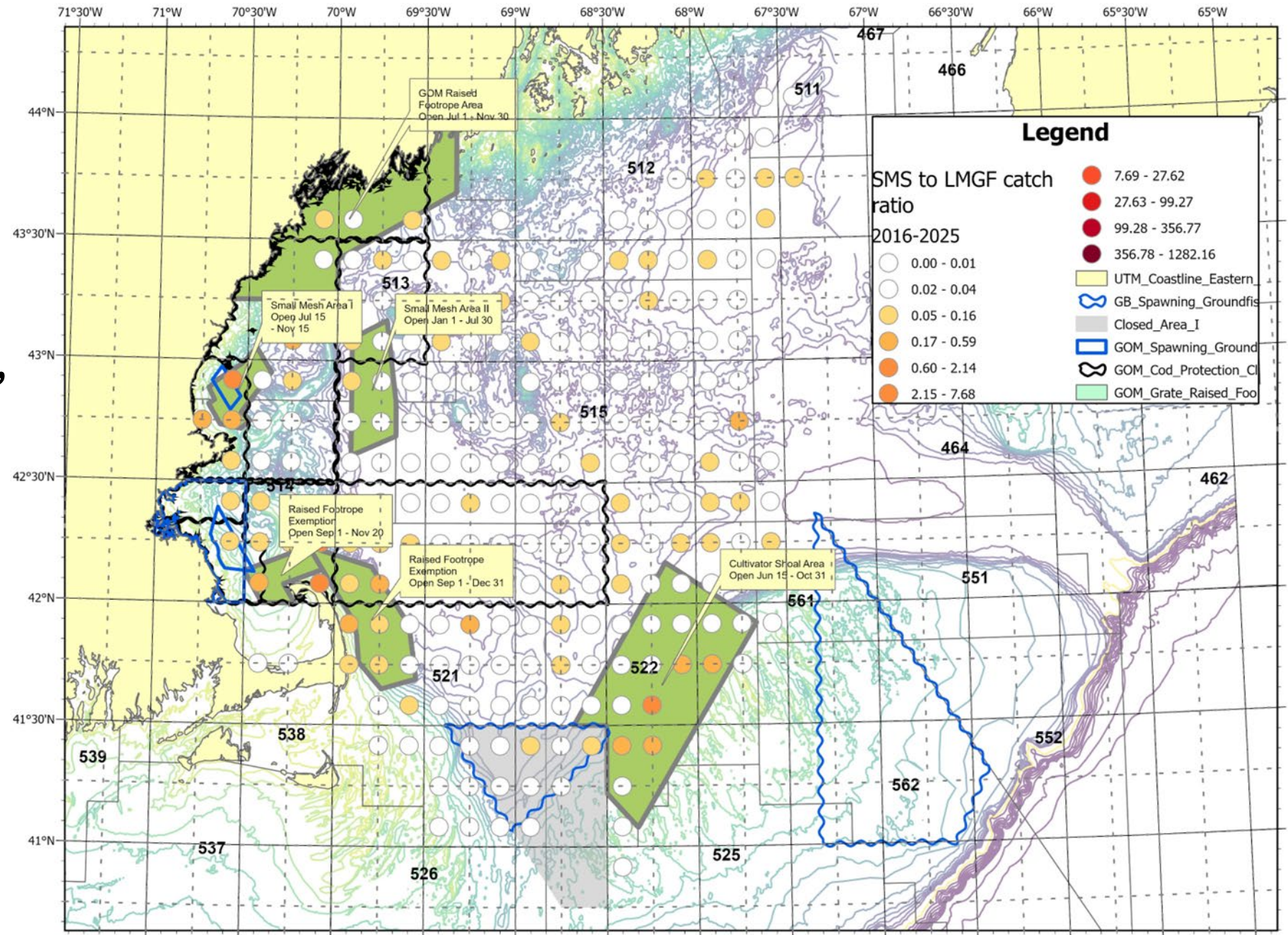


AP & PDT DISCUSSION

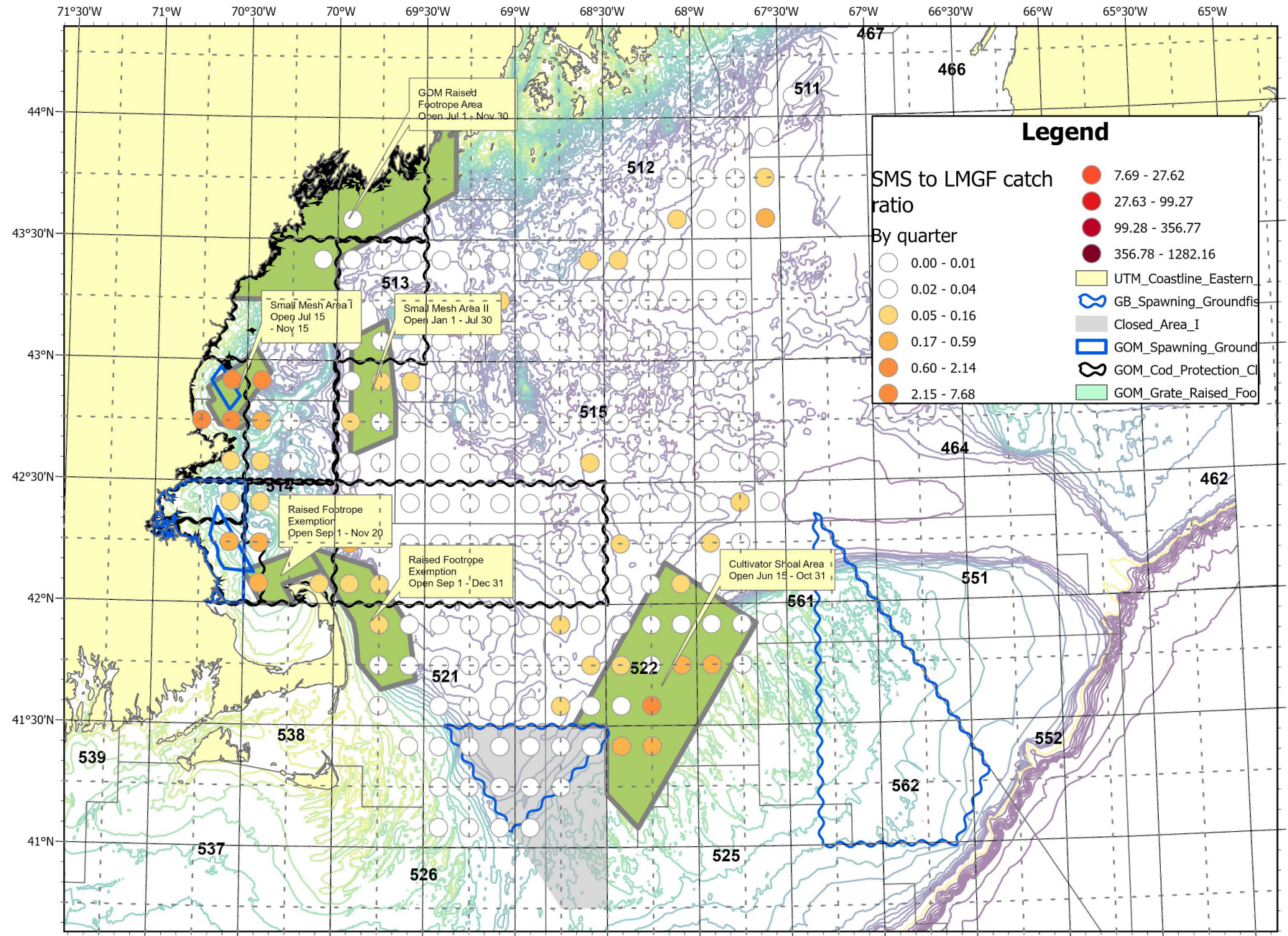
- Focus analysis on expanding existing exemption areas rather than creating new areas
- Align with updated management areas (ex. Small-Mesh Area II western boundary and WGOM closed area)
- Interest in southern portion of Cultivator Shoal (former Closed Area I cutout), Small-Mesh Area II
 - Small-Mesh Area I more challenging – lobster gear, hard bottom, groundfish species



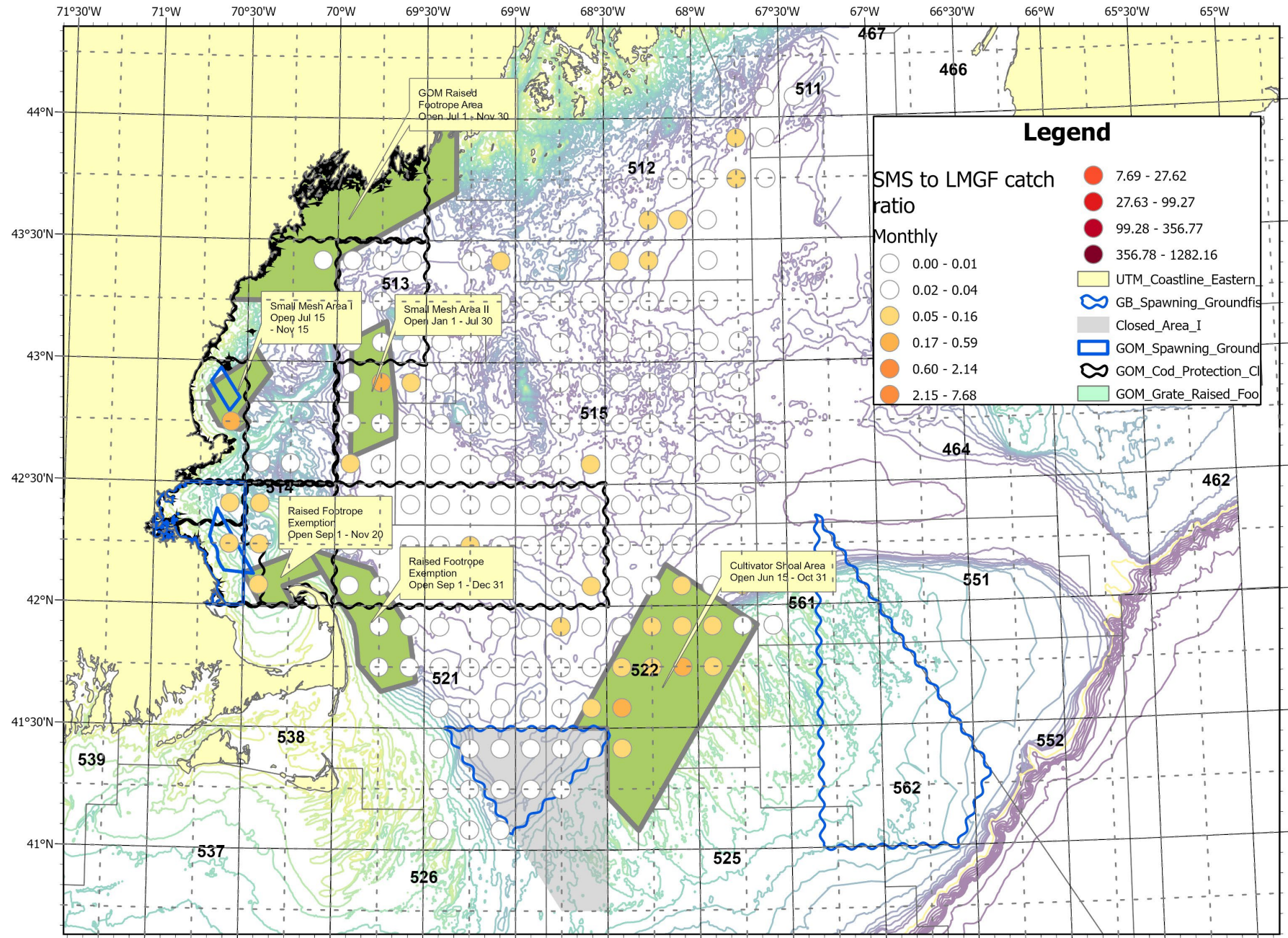
Small-mesh multispecies to large-mesh groundfish catch, 2016-2025 by large mesh trawls on observed trips



Quarter 3:
 Small-mesh
 multispecies to
 large-mesh
 groundfish catch,
 2016-2025
 by large mesh
 trawls on
 observed trips

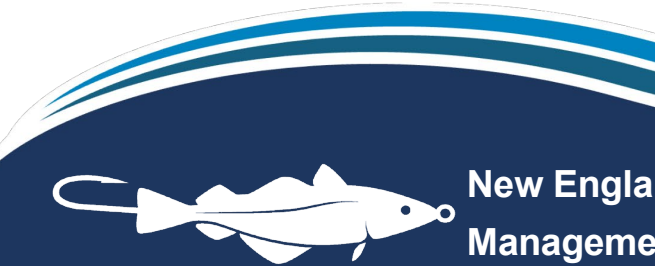
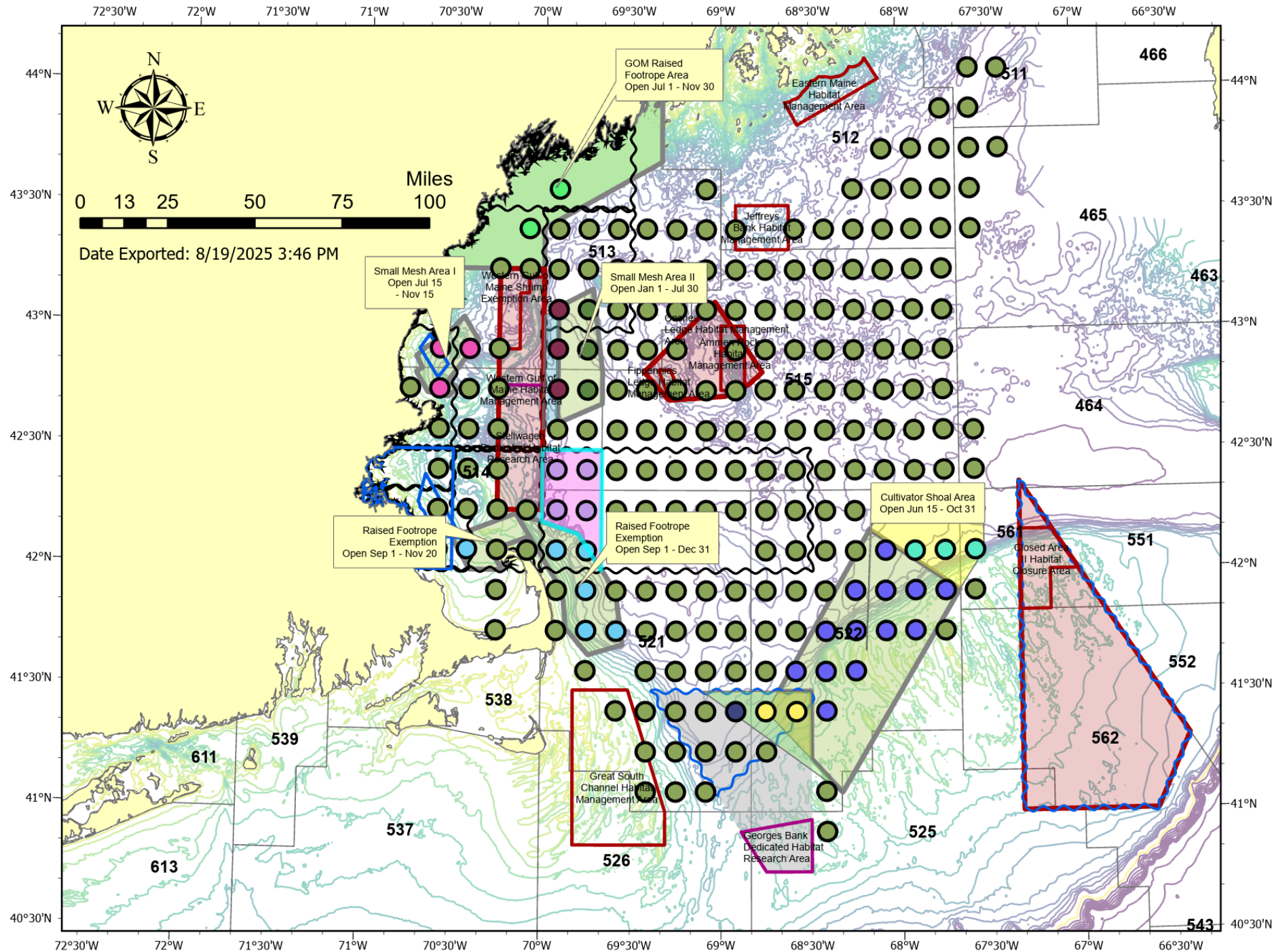


September:
 Small-mesh
 multispecies to
 large-mesh
 groundfish catch,
 2016-2025
 by large mesh
 trawls on
 observed trips



New England
 Management

Data assignment to exemption areas and alternatives



Average catch ratio and variance by area & month

Green = existing seasons; purple=ratio > average; orange = potential alternatives

GEAR_TYPE (All)		MESH_GROUP > 5.5 in		MONTH												Grand Total
Exemption area	Alternative	Values	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Grand Total	
Cultivator Shoal Area	NULL	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.	0.062	0.059	0.020	0.072	0.118	0.097	0.247	0.084	0.114	0.164	0.097	0.057	0.098	
		Variance	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.005	0.011	0.004	0.118	0.008	0.005	0.043	0.015	0.003	0.019	
GOM Raised Footrope Area	NULL	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.							0.037	0.027	0.003	0.036	0.078		0.035	
		Variance								0.000					0.001	
Raised Footrope Exemptic	NULL	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.	0.058	0.106	0.170	0.257	0.113	0.106	0.074	0.050	0.033	0.080	0.190	0.102	0.107	
		Variance	0.002	0.008	0.017	0.016	0.003	0.002	0.006	0.001	0.002	0.008	0.023	0.009	0.010	
Small Mesh Area I	NULL	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.		0.006	0.003	0.003		0.102	1.887	34.672	2.798	0.604	0.252	1.234	5.612	
		Variance		0.000	0.000	0.000		0.004	3.360	2263.977	18.493	0.589	0.054	0.862	413.599	
Small Mesh Area II	NULL	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.	0.040	0.029	0.025	0.035	0.055	0.044	0.028	0.014	0.071	0.048	0.038	0.093	0.044	
		Variance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.006	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.008	
NULL	CSA cut out	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.					0.066	0.116	0.029	0.015	0.018	0.008			0.045	
		Variance					0.000	0.023	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000			0.006	
NULL	SW of CSA.	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.					0.063	0.059	0.006	0.002	0.002	0.000	0.011	0.021	0.030	
		Variance					0.004	0.000	0.000		0.000				0.002	
NULL	NE of CSA.	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.	0.093	0.065	0.051	0.146	0.140	0.086	0.131	0.048	0.056	0.075	0.127	0.081	0.092	
		Variance	0.012	0.008	0.003	0.029	0.003	0.003	0.007	0.002	0.005	0.007	0.009	0.004	0.009	
NULL	W of SMA2	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.	0.085	0.034	0.035	0.051	0.053	0.053	0.021	0.011	0.029	0.033	0.026	0.071	0.043	
		Variance	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	
NULL	N of RFA2	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.	0.096	0.077	0.042	0.053	0.084	0.107	0.032	0.064	0.037	0.035	0.048	0.042	0.059	
		Variance	0.005	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.003	0.000	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.002	
NULL	NULL	SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.	0.031	0.045	0.036	0.041	0.043	0.037	0.027	0.026	0.023	0.029	0.051	0.043	0.035	
		Variance	0.001	0.003	0.006	0.002	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.001	0.010	0.005	0.003	
Total SMS_GF_CATCH_RATIO.			0.044	0.049	0.038	0.052	0.055	0.049	0.087	0.744	0.067	0.044	0.061	0.064	0.126	
Total Variance			0.002	0.003	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.003	0.157	61.707	0.267	0.012	0.011	0.025	6.384	



Possible Management Measures for 2026 and Future Actions



PURPOSE OF MEETING

- Identify and recommend measures for the 2026 management action or potential 2027 management priorities
 - 2027 – 2031 catch specifications
 - Assessment data update, risk policy factor scoring
 - Red hake possession limit adjustments
 - Exemption area adjustments
 - Standardization of bycatch allowances
 - Letter of Authorization requirements
 - Exemption area seasons
 - Exemption area boundaries



Specifications	Framework adjustment	Amendment
Status determination criteria and thresholds	Overfishing definitions and mortality targets (P* vs Z-score)	Limited access
OFL, ABC, ACL, and TAL specifications	Quotas, seasonal adjustments, participation requirements, & additions/deletions for experimental or exempted fisheries	Harvest control rules
Possession limits	Stock boundaries	
In-season possession limit triggers (TAL trigger)	Catch limit allocations, including seasonal and area limits	
	Biological reference points, including reference time series	
	SBRM provisions	
	Whiting DAS effort reduction	
	Any other existing FMP measures	

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS OR MOTIONS



Other Business

